

ANZ Tennis hot shots: Developing, nurturing and promoting participation

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ABSTRACT

ANZ Tennis Hot Shots is Tennis Australia's official development program specifically designed to introduce primary school children between five and 12 years of age to tennis. At the core of the program is an innovative, practical philosophy called 'Learning through play'. This means that playing the game of tennis, or modified versions of the game, is the central feature of all sessions. The use of tailored equipment including smaller courts, racquets and low-compression tennis balls ensures children are introduced to tennis in an environment that is suited to their age and skill level. This approach makes learning tennis fun and easier and the result is more children playing a better standard of tennis.

Key words:

tennis development, learning through play, tailored equipment

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INTRODUCTION

Since the launch of ANZ Tennis Hot Shots in 2008 the program has focused on getting more children playing tennis more often. The ANZ Tennis Hot Shots participant pathway has four stages which children progress through - Blue, Red, Orange and Green (Table 1.) These stages are age related but not age dependant as children progress as they attain the relevant tactical and technical competencies in addition to behavioural competencies situated in the social and emotional learning domains related to developing a love of the game and being a good sport.

Stage	Age (years)	Court Size	Racquet	Ball
Blue	3-5	Variable - defined using dropdown lines	19 inch	Red ball, foam ball, large soft balls, balloons
Red	5-8	3m x 8.23m progressing to 5.5 x 10.97	21 inch	Red 25% compression
Orange	8-10	6.5m x 18m	23 inch	Orange 50% compression
Green	9-12	Full court	25 inch	Green 75% compression

Table 1. ANZ Tennis Hot Shots stages

In order to promote children's participation in tennis, four key program components were established with the coach being a key driver in each with the exception of Community Play. Tennis

Australia coaches are supported to deliver the ANZ Tennis Hot Shots program in various ways and the ANZ Tennis Hot Shots philosophy is integrated into the overall Coach Education pathway.

- ANZ Tennis Hot Shots Schools
- ANZ Tennis Hot Shots Community Play*
- ANZ Tennis Hot Shots Coaching
- ANZ Tennis Hot Shots Match Play

* Community Play is a volunteered delivered program for Regional Clubs who cannot access a qualified tennis coach.

ANZ TENNIS HOT SHOTS COACHING PROGRAM

The ANZ Tennis Hot Shots program provides coaches with the capacity to modify the game by adapting the playing area (e.g., making the court smaller or larger), changing the equipment (e.g., using a variety of sized balls with varying compression levels and different size racquets) and changing the rules (e.g., permitting the ball to bounce twice) to cater for the developmental readiness of children.

Coach Demographics

There are currently 973 registered ANZ Tennis Hot Shots Coaches in Australia. Of these coaches 83% are male and only 17% are female which is consistent with our overall workforce. In relation to the qualifications of coaches, 30% have a Junior Development qualification (equivalent to ITF Coaching Beginner and Intermediate Players) and 70% have a Club Professional (equivalent to ITF Coaching Advanced Players) or higher qualification.

Coach Benefits

ANZ Tennis Hot Shots coaches receive numerous benefits to support the delivery of the program in the areas of education, marketing, equipment, participant benefits, money can't buy experiences and the opportunity to link to the Tennis for Primary School programs in addition to the ANZ Tennis Hot Shots Match Play program. Upon initial registration coaches receive a starter equipment pack which includes balls, nets and signage as well as general program resources such as certificates, marketing templates, competency report cards and access to the ANZ Tennis Hot Shots lesson planning App.

The ANZ Tennis Hot Shots coaching App was launched in 2015 and is available globally in both the iTunes and android app stores. It is an easy-to-use tool packed with more than 120 activities with video footage which are broken down into the four stages to ensure coaches meet the developmental needs of kids. Furthermore, it provides coaches with term plans and the ability to create their own activities and term plans. To date the app has been downloaded more than 3,500 times and has been a fantastic tool to assist in the upskilling of coaches Australia wide.

To reward coaches for their significant contribution, a \$2 rebate to spend on equipment for each child they register to the program annually is provided. Coaches are also able to apply for additional funding to support the marking of blended lines or the installation of permanent mini courts.

Marketing support

Since the launch of ANZ Tennis Hot Shots, Tennis Australia has invested significantly in the branding and marketing of the program. In addition to providing coaches with local area marketing templates, the program has a national marketing campaign during both spring and summer. These campaigns, which drive the acquisition of new business for coaches, have evolved since the launch of the program and currently focus on demonstrating that tennis is a sport you can play for life. The campaign drives more than 200,000 unique browsers to hotshots.tennis.com.au annually and by capturing data when parents complete the expression of interest form it has provided the following insights in connection to new participants.

Gender: 58% boys and 42% girls

Stage: Blue 18%, Red 48%, Orange 21% and Green 13%

Day they want to play: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 14%, Friday 13%, Saturday 18% and Sunday 13%



These insights demonstrate the importance of delivering a quality program for children as 66% of the participants entering ANZ Tennis Hot Shots are in the Blue and Red stages. It also highlights the desire of parents to have their children learn tennis on weekends with 31% of all requests for sessions evident on the weekend. There are 654 coaches nationally who utilise the ANZ Tennis Hot Shots website to promote their tennis venues with each coach averaging three ANZ Tennis Hot Shots coaching venues.

TENNIS FOR SCHOOLS PROGRAM

The Tennis for Primary Schools program provides opportunities for teachers and coaches to deliver the ANZ Tennis Hot Shots (ANZTHS) in the school environment. Teachers and coaches have the ability to participate in one of two programs, the School Partnership Program; which sees tennis delivered as part of the health and physical education curriculum or the School Play Program; which supports in transitioning students from learning the game to playing the game. Both programs support the ongoing pathway of connecting schools to community clubs for ongoing participation.

The School Partnership Program is Tennis Australia's flagship school program with more than 2,000 schools across Australia delivering tennis. The Tennis for Primary Schools resource which supports the delivering of this program has been developed to align to the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education (AC:HPE) and has been endorsed by the Australian Council for Health Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER).

The resource addresses two strands, Personal Social and Community Health (PSCH) and Movement and Physical Activity (MPA) as embedded in the AC:HPE and is underpinned by the Game Sense Approach (GSA). This educative approach to pedagogy, which is applied throughout the resource, has importance to the development of general capabilities in the Australian Curriculum and can therefore be delivered across all learning areas.

ANZ TENNIS HOT SHOTS MATCH PLAY

ANZ Tennis Hot Shots Match Play is designed to provide children, who are learning tennis, the opportunity to transition from learning the game to playing matches in a modified, fun and friendly teambased environment. It is intended to provide children with a positive experience and to foster a love of the game that encourages lifelong tennis participation. The program is supported with complimentary resources to assist in the delivery of a quality playing experience for children. There are currently 381 venues delivering Match Play Australia wide. Australian tennis players Daria Gavrilova and Thanasi Kokkinakis have recently become ambassadors of the program.

PROMOTING ANZ TENNIS HOT SHOTS AT THE AUSTRALIAN OPEN AND AUSTRALIAN OPEN SERIES EVENTS

The Australian Open and the Australian Open Series events provide a platform to promote the ANZ Tennis Hot Shots program and reward current participants and deliverers. At the Australian Open, families and children are provided with numerous opportunities to pick up a racquet and play. In 2017 more than 35,000 people visited the ANZ Tennis Hot Shots Fan Zone activation and over 12,000 children played on the ANZ Tennis Hot Shots mini-courts.

Coaches are rewarded with the opportunity to have children from their clubs participate in on-court activities prior to the start of play each day with over 100 coaches and 1,000 children participating in 2017. Additionally, more than 150 ANZ Tennis Hot Shots players had the opportunity to toss the coin for a main draw singles match during the tournament.

In 2017 a record 17,537 people attended the fifth annual Kids Tennis Day which provides families and children to play ANZ Tennis Hot Shots at Melbourne Park on the Saturday prior to the Australian Open. This family event included a one-hour spectacular on Rod Laver arena that included tennis champions such as Novak Djokovic, Roger Federer, Milos Raonic and Daria Gavrilova who were joined by DreamWorks Animation's Poppy and Branch from the hit movie Trolls, The Penguins of Madagascar and PO from Kung Fu Panda 3 for some fun on centre court.

CONCLUSION

The holistic approach to the growth of ANZ Tennis Hot Shots since its launch has proved to be a key to its success in driving tennis participation. The success of the Tennis for Primary Schools program in recent years has resulted in more than 380,000 kids participating in ANZ Tennis Hot Shots. Increasing the transition of children through the ANZ Tennis Hot Shots pathway into Match Play will provide the platform for the on-going success of tennis participation in Australia in the years to come.

The role of the coach is fundamental to the continued growth of the program as they provide the opportunity for the aforementioned transition of children from tennis in schools to club based programs. Furthermore, coaches have the ability to inspire a passion for the sport in children and develop their fundamental technical and tactical competencies to set them up for a lifetime of play.

RECOMMENDED ITF TENNIS ACADEMY CONTENT (CLICK BELOW)



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